

# Running Out of Time

By: Scott Aravena

# **Prologue**

Every day people are running out of time. They are using too much and wasting it. Time is a very valuable thing in our world. It is worth millions, actually. It is worth more to some people than food or water. More than family and friends to some.

Welcome to a world where time is the currency. Here, time is life. You are given 25 years plus 10 years for expenses and when your time runs out...you die. You also have to use your time to buy food or drinks. As resources are depleting, the price of things keep going up; it costs four minutes for a cup of coffee.

It all started in 2100, 200 years ago. The world was overflowing with people. In the 2100 world census, there was a total of 12 billion people in the world and not enough food to feed them. The United Nations were scrambling for something to do. They could not just kill most of the population. In 2110, they finally came to a solution. Every year in every country, until there were one billion people in the world, everyone who wanted a child would take a test on parenting. One thousand people with the one thousand top scores in every country would be allowed to have a child. If you did not get a score that was in the top thousand in your country and you still had one, you and the other parent could go to jail for up to twenty years.

Then when that goal of one billion people in the world was reached in 2200, a chip was installed in every newborns' brain giving them exactly 25 years. When that individuals' time was up, the chip would send a spark into your brain shutting it down. This chip was also hack proof. If you dared to hack the chip, you risked it sparking early. It was also in the center of the brain and almost impossible to reach it.

People were enraged by this. You could hear the roars of protesters in the capital. They did not want to have their children live short lives. They, like all parents, wanted their kids to live long natural lives.

Fifty years later, it was decided by the government that all newborns from now on will be given an extra ten years to spend on food and other expenses. This decision lightened the tension between the people and the government, but not by much.

This is how life became what it is today; short. The average life expectancy today is 25 years of age. I have heard that before this whole ordeal sprang out, the life expectancy could be up to 80 years of age! I could only imagine what it would be like living that long.

# **Chapter One: My Life**

I, like most people, live in a shabby, rundown, rat infested apartment. At night you can hear the *pat, pat, pat, pat* of the rats running under the floorboards and in the walls. In addition, at night you can never see where you are going, because the electricity is always out. When you are asleep, you feel the bedbugs crawling on you and biting you. It smells horrible from all of the rat droppings. The cabinets in my one-bedroom apartment have scratches on the inside and outside from the rats. I find rats in my rusty old tub when I go to take a shower. Also, because of rats, my couch has so many scratches it looks like a pack of wild dogs attacked it. If you dare to walk on the ground at night, you feel the rats scurrying like madmen over your feet and risk feeling the sharp pain of one biting you. If you think that is bad, it is only the beginning.

My name is John and I am 20 years old. I have five years left plus my three years of spending time. My apartment is located in Washington D.C.; in the outskirts, of course. I work as a construction worker and make twenty minutes an hour. I usually do the oddball jobs like get the workers coffee or get supplies. In one day I earn about one hundred and sixty minutes a day plus overtime. It is not much, but it helps keep me alive a little longer.

I only have a couple living relatives left. Those relatives include my sister, Susan, and my brother, Jeff. My sister lives in a five floor mansion in Maine with her husband and three children, Steven, Carlos, and Julia. They have the time to afford that huge mansion because Susan's husband has an account full of time. They will be able to live until they die of natural causes. They have that account because Susan's



husband, Frank, inherited that account that was started by his great, great, great, great-grandfather who was a billionaire in the old currency when the world started using time as money. He exchanged all of his fortune for time and stuffed it all into an account that is still packed with time today. Unfortunately, the time and greed took over my sister and turned her into someone I did not know. She then turned her back on the family.

My brother's whereabouts are currently unknown. The last time I saw him was five years ago when my sister turned her back on the family. Back then he had five years left, but he could very well be dead. When my sister turned her back on us, my brother, Jeff, who was very close to her, was crushed. He ran away a couple days later and I never saw him again.

I also have a best friend named Carl who has had my back ever since the first grade where we met. He is 21 years old and only has four years left. He is absolutely amazing with computers. He has definitely earned the title of Hacker from me because he had managed to get into the government database and can hack into anything you throw at him. Unfortunately, besides the chips in our brains that cut short our lives to a mere 25 years.

Have I mentioned that I disdain the fact that almost everyone, besides government officials and rich people, lives only an average of 25 years? I despise it so much that I long for the day that people can live normal, natural lives. The day in which order will be restored to the way it was before, and we do not live short lives, but full, long ones.

## **Chapter Two: The Discovery**

In the past couple months, Carl and I have been hanging out at Carl's rundown residence, which, believe it or not, is worse than my place. It is also a one-bedroom apartment, but it is filthy. It is as if he is living in the rodents' living space, and not the opposite. There are piles of rat droppings everywhere that look like miniature promontories. One wall is porous with rodent holes by the floor. You can tell that the repulsive animals have made dens in Carl's microscopic kitchen with old, faded wallpaper. For years Carl has continually tried to oust the hideous and disgusting rodents from his apartment, but all methods have failed.

When I walk up to his bolstered door with locks from top to bottom, (Carl can be very paranoid at times), before I could even knock, the door swung open and I found Carl as happy as ever as he quickly yanked me through the doorway and the horrible smell instantly hit me.

"I've been so excited to show you this all day!" he exclaimed jollily. "I have found what every hacker has been looking for, for years."

"What are you talking about?" I asked cautiously. What was Carl up to now?

"I found it, I found it, I found it!" He yelled so loud the Martians on Mars probably heard him. He forced my head to look at the computer monitor.

On the screen it said:

# CIA Database File: 1,024,175

**Classified**

President Patterson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] National Chip Control Center.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Pentagon: Ring A.

Could this be true? Has Carl actually found the place where the government controls our chips? Is there a way to destroy it?

This was all going through my head when Carl said, "Isn't this amazing!" he roared, "I finally found it!"

To me, at first, it was just a worthless file that we could not use at all. To me, it just added to the useless knowledge Carl and I contain about the government that Carl has collected over the years.

That night when I got home from Carl's apartment, I took the rats out of the tub and took a cold shower. Not that I really had a choice, if I want warm water, I need to boil it. After that, I went to bed letting the bedbugs get into my crew cut, brown hair. That night I had the weirdest dream I ever had. I dreamt that Carl and I somehow managed to get inside the ring of the Pentagon and we were in the National Chip Control Center. Carl was typing away on his computer trying to put a virus in the Chips that would not hurt the people, but disable the chips. I was standing watch with a gun. Then, out of nowhere, I heard a voice.

"You really thought you could get away with this," boomed the voice. Then, out of nowhere, I see someone very familiar, President Patterson and two secret service officers.

BOOM, BOOM! That's when I wake up with a cold sweat. That whole dream seemed far-fetched, but could it really be possible that two regular plebeians could pull off such a stunt?

I get out of bed, go to the kitchen, and pour myself a glass of water. When I am done gulping the water down, I kick a rat out of my way and go back to sleep.



## **Chapter Three: The Loss**

Today, after my day at work, I went to Carl's apartment just to hang out. When I walked up to his door, I noticed it was open, and not locked from top to bottom like usually. From knowing Carl for as long as I have, I knew this was not good. I kicked the wood door open and found the place a wreck. His apartment had looked like a tornado hit it, and then to be followed by an earthquake, tsunami, and every other natural disaster there is.

The living room was littered with most of the things Carl owned. His computer monitors lay on the ground, obviously, destroyed beyond repair. Their hard drives literally ripped in half. The floor is barely visible from the book pages that have been ripped from their seams. The chairs that once were neatly placed in the middle of the small room now are overturned.

Carl's kitchen is worse than the living room. food is everywhere, cereal boxes are ripped open, the refrigerator is wide open, but worst of all, the rats are having an all you can eat buffet.

When I get into Carl's room, I see Carl on his bed sleeping. I know he is sleeping because I see his chest slowly moving up and down. I maneuver my way through the clothes that almost completely cover Carl's floor and take a piece of paper sticking out from Carl's hand. It said:

Dear Mr. Carl Henderson,

We are sorry to inform you that your sister, Carla Henderson, has run out of her time after 27 years. Her funeral will be held at Johnson Funeral Home in Washington, D.C. For more information, please call (732) 555-9258. Once again, we are sorry for your loss.

Sincerely,

*Steve Johnson*

Steve Johnson, Owner of Johnson F.H.

I now understand how this happened. When Carl, who was very close to Carla, read the letter, he went barbarian, then passed out on his bed.

I stayed in Carl's apartment cleaning up a little until Carl woke up. After two hours, he finally woke up.

"W-w-w-what are you doing here?" Carl stuttered embarrassed at how his apartment looked.

"I came after work," I answered. "I'm sorry about your sister, pal."

"Ya, me, too. I just wish I got to see her one more time before she died. Anyway, thanks for trying to tidy up," stammered Carl barely containing himself.

"Why don't you just go back to sleep. I will try my best to clean up," I assured Carl.

Right then, Carl turns around and sobs his way back to his room.

## **Chapter Four: The Plan**

A couple days after Carl's sister, Carla, died, Carl came over my apartment furious. He thinks that we should go and try to destroy the National Chip Control Center in the Pentagon.

"What do we have to lose!" Carl screamed after I said we could never pull off a stunt like destroying something hidden in the most protected part of the Pentagon. "I've lost everyone to those stupid chips," screamed Carl. "My parents, brother, and now my sister!"

After a couple of days I realized he was right. What do we have left? Carl has lost everyone and I only have my horrible sister and my brother that could very well be dead.

That night when Carl came to my apartment, I told him I was in. About a week later, we had the structure of our plan.

First, we would use most, if not all, of our spending time and get everything we needed to pull this off. We need a good computer for Carl, two handguns, ammo, flashlights, food, water, fake military suits, fake military ID's, and some computer cables for Carl.

Next, we will air a video that Carl made of armed terrorists in the streets of Washington, D.C. that should distract people long enough for me and Carl to sneak in with our fake military suits.

From there we make our way to the inner ring of the Pentagon and when we get into the National Chip control Center, Carl will send a virus into the program controlling the chips and hopefully it will deactivate the chips and not harm the people.

That is the plan we came up with and we are planning to try it in one week.

## **Chapter Five: The Distraction**

Today is the day that Carl and I are going to try to infiltrate the National Chip Control Center and put an end to the chips.

Last night we finally received our final and most important supply for this mission; the fake uniforms. We finally got them after burning through both mine and Carl's spending time. That may sound crazy, but if our plan works, then we won't need that time.

I can't describe how nervous I am about this. There has never been one attempt that we know about, of someone breaking into the Pentagon, getting passed security, and then sending a virus into the Chip Control Center's hard drive without killing the entire population of the United States of America.

I keep having nightmares of getting caught or being killed. They are haunting me literally; I have not had a night's sleep in five days.

Carl has been fine, though. I don't know how, but he is not scared at all. He just finished the virus and the video and is now trying to hack into the Washington, D.C. broadcasting station. At any moment we could b --

"I got in!" exclaimed Carl. "Let's go, John, get your uniform on, we are going to the Pentagon."

## **Chapter Six: The Pentagon**

The warehouse we were at was not far from the Pentagon so we walked. When I say it was chaotic, believe me. Carl's video had really made people believe that there were rebels killing people in the streets of Washington, D.C. There were soldiers and police officers racing towards the distraction.

Perfect, I thought.

"We only have a couple minutes," whispered Carl as we approached the guarded gate protecting the Pentagon.

"State your name and rank," demanded the soldier.

"John Smith, Lieutenant First Class," I shoved out of my throat remembering what was on my fake ID card.

"Carl Henderson, Lieutenant Colonel First Class," stated Carl showing no fear whatsoever.

The guard took our cards, went into the guard tower as bag as the Washington Memorial on steroids, scanned our cards and let us in.

"That was easy," I sighed pushing in the doors on the West Wing of one of the most iconic buildings in America representing our military and national security strength; the Pentagon.

As we walked into the Pentagon, I could not hold in my astonishment as I walked on the white tile floor always waxed and parallel to the glistening white walls as white as snow.

We walked through metal detectors, but they allowed us to carry our weapons because of our rank. That three years of spending money came in handy. After passing the metal detector, we were officially allowed in.

We walked into an elevator, that went sideways with granite floors and tile walls, that took us two rings into the Pentagon. We then took another one that brought us two more rings in.

When we approached the elevator going from Ring B to Ring A, we found that it was guarded.

"May I have your cards," asked one of the guards holding his hand out waiting to receive what he asked for. When we gave our fake cards to him, we watched as our cards get scanned by a very new modern computer.

When the guard scanned the cards the first time, he looked puzzled. I could see the red screen reflect off of his glasses.

Carl and I instantly looked at each other. We decided, back at my apartment, that if this situation occurred, we would rather be safe than sorry.

The guard scanned our card multiple times trying to figure out what was wrong. After the tenth try, he gave up.

"Come with u --," demanded the guard as I punched him straight in the face knocking him out cold. At that same time the other two guards started shooting at Carl and I. I was able to take cover behind the oak desk where the guard scanned our cards, but Carl got caught in the crossfire. It was amazing! Carl was dodging bullets like Neo from the Matrix. I pulled out my gun and shot both guards now shooting only at Carl. Each shot hit them in the chest.



“Let’s go.” I yell at Carl as we both enter the elevator. We are now in the belly of the beast.

## **Chapter 7: Ring A**

Carl and I were expecting to have a group of soldiers waiting for us in Ring A or to have the elevator just stop in its tracks as if waiting for a deer to move out of the way. When the doors slide open, we find nobody waiting for us. Apparently, no one found the mess we made.

It was amazing how many different rooms there were. We passed many conference rooms and even saw a room that said: “Extraterrestrial Files.” After passing about 15 different rooms, we saw it. We found what we’ve been looking for. A blue sign above the door said: “National Chip Control Center.” When I went to open the door, I heard a voice.

“What do you think you’re doing?” demanded the stern-faced guard behind us.

“We are installing a new program in the Chip Control Center,” answered Carl showing no fear, “It’s on the schedule today.”

The security guard pulled out a yellow piece of paper from his pocket and said, “Oh, okay.” Then, he walked away.

“Was it really on the schedule for today?” I asked.

“It wasn’t until I changed it,” said Carl smiling as he opened the door to what we came here for; The National Chip Control Center of the United States of America.

## **Chapter 8: The NCCC**

As soon as Carl and I laid eyes on the National Chip Control Center, or NCCC for short, we were flabbergasted. We were in computer geek heaven. The walls were lined with high end top of the line computers. They were all as thin as a piece of paper and probably weighed as much as a feather. The screens could not get any clearer. It looked like you were really where the screen showed.

In the center of the room was this huge hard drive the size of my room that Carl said probably can store 2000 terabytes, or 2,000,000 gigabytes of memory. It looks like a regular hard drive from the outside just about 100 times bigger. Too bad Carl's virus will destroy it.

"Wow," Carl and I gasped at the same exact time in unison. Back into reality Carl and I go right to work. Carl opens the virus and plugs his computer into the hard drive. After about twenty minutes when the virus was 99% complete, and almost ready to destroy the massive hard drive making our chips useless, a gray tube came crashing through the window of the door and exploded completely blinding Carl and I. That's when the door was kicked open and we unfortunately heard a familiar voice.

"What gave you the audacity to do such a thing?" questioned the famous President of the United States of America, President Patterson. "Didn't you think it was going to end like this?" questioned the president. "You never thought that if doing this was so easy someone wouldn't have already done it?"

“Shut up!” yelled Carl spitting at the president’s face who was very close to him. This action earned Carl the butt stock of a gun smashed into his face knocking him out instantly, and making blood pour out of his nose like an erupting volcano.

The president now, obviously, infuriated by Carl’s words came over to me and demanded, “Anything you want to say?”

Right when I was about to say something, I watched the collision course of the back of a gun to my face.

BOOM! I was out cold.

## **Chapter 9: The Execution**

After five days of no food and no sleep in my five foot by five foot cell with no bed, toilet, nothing, someone finally came to see me. It was two people I have not seen in a very long time, my sister, Susan, and my brother, Jeff.

I cannot put into words how happy I was to see Jeff. He looked so nice for someone who ran away. He had a very expensive watch and tuxedo on. I wish he came alone. I wasn't happy to see Susan.

"Where did you go?" I asked Jeff eager to find out what happened to him.

"About a week after I left, I went to Susan and she took me in," he answered.

That explains the watch and tux, I thought. I turned toward Susan and questioned, "Why would you take him in after leaving me, him, Mom, and Dad in the dust?"

"I-I-I-I'm really sorry about that," stuttered Susan. "I-I-I let greed drive me away from my family."

This really hit me. I thought I would hate my sister until the day I died, but I'm starting to forgive her. Does she deserve my forgiveness?

"I hope yo --" she started as five guards opened the door to my cell. One of them had Carl.

Carl looked absolutely horrible. He had always been a little chunky and, maybe, ate too much so the five days without food really got to him. He was shaking and had bad bruises all over his body. He apparently did something that made guards mad. His nose was bleeding and he also had a black eye.

“Your five minutes are up!” gnarled the head guard. He then faced me and said, “It’s time for your public execution with this one,” pointing at Carl.

“What, you said he wasn’t going to be executed!” yelled Susan.

“Well, I lied,” said the guard laughing as he pulled me out of my cell. When my brother and sister came after me, two guards slammed them into the wall.

“No!” yelled my siblings in unison as I was taken away.

“Shut up!” screamed the guard, “Or you’ll end up like your brother!”

When we left my cell, Carl and I were taken to a room with two cameras facing a wall stained by blood and littered with bullet holes.

“I’m sorry I sucked you into this,” mumbled Carl as they lined us up along the red wall with hundreds of bullet holes.

“It’s okay,” I sighed, “At least we tried.” That was when the firing squad lined up.

“3..2..1..fire!” yelled the guard that brought us in here.

The bullets felt like lava melting away where it hit my body. I instantly fell to my knees. Then, everything went black.

## **Epilogue**

You may be wondering, is that it? Does the story just end like that? Is the United States of America still using the chips? Here is where I will be answering those questions.

About five years after the public televised execution of John Smith and Carl Henderson, a group of rebels overthrew the government and restored life back to the way it used to be; natural.

These rebels formed a couple weeks after discovering the brave acts Carl and John executed to try to make everyone's life longer and better. Within months the rebel numbers grew to a staggering 1/3rd of the population. They then started destroying chip manufacturing plants and eventually took control of military bases and buildings. When the rebels controlled everything, but Washington, D.C., the government surrendered.

In the next couple years, the rebel leaders created a country where people wanted to live. A place where people from all over the world came for work and freedom. It also became a place where people could live natural lives.

The End.